



WAYS TO CELEBRATE THE ARTS

Every Thursday at Central Park East School II in East Harlem, New York, the whole school gathers for a community meeting. At the heart is a performance where you'll find sixth graders helping kindergarteners with dance steps, and third and fourth graders drumming a welcoming beat. The weekly celebration of song and dance looks as if it's taken months to rehearse. This is just one impressive example of how teachers are integrating the arts (yes, despite loss of funding and mandates to focus on the basics.) You've told us you believe in the arts—and the research agrees. Kids do better in *all* subjects when they're involved in the arts.

That's why we've gathered the best arts activities and ideas from across the country. We hope you're inspired by what's inside. >>

Ways to spark creativity

1 ASK QUESTIONS: Creativity means thinking differently. "When a child says, 'We could do it this way, or that way, and maybe bring in people from over there'—that's creativity," says Elizabeth Mowrer-Reynolds, an associate professor of education in Idaho. Get kids thinking outside the box by posing open-ended questions like "How many ways can we solve this?"

2 MAKE THE TIME: Include one new creative activity a week. It will pay off when you see better understanding, says Jon Baer, author of *Creative Teachers, Creative Students* (Allyn-Bacon, 1996). Teach longitude and latitude by having students imagine an island at certain coordinates, Baer suggests.

3 RETHINK BAD BEHAVIOR: The class clown's inner Picasso may be going unnoticed. Baer explains that artistic kids often question authority—a disruptive trait in a classroom. "Not every troublemaker is creative," says Baer. "But some of them are." If you have a child like this, try to work with his or her creative spirit, not against it.

4 ENCOURAGE PERSEVERANCE: "One of the biggest problems kids are having is that if something isn't entertaining enough, they drop it," says Debbie Wilburn, county extension agent for the University of Georgia. Teach students to break a project up and encourage them to complete each step.

5 CUT LOOSE: Like in Harry Chapin's song "Flowers are Red," about a boy whose teacher insists he color all flowers one color, excessive control can destroy the creative impulse in kids. So be accepting of their ideas. Let them color the flowers however they want.

—JOY LANZENDORFER

Rule #1: Color Outside the Lines

4 Easy Puppet Theater Ideas

TABLETOP Drape a blanket over a table. Children can crouch behind it and use the surface as a stage. (Props can go beneath.)

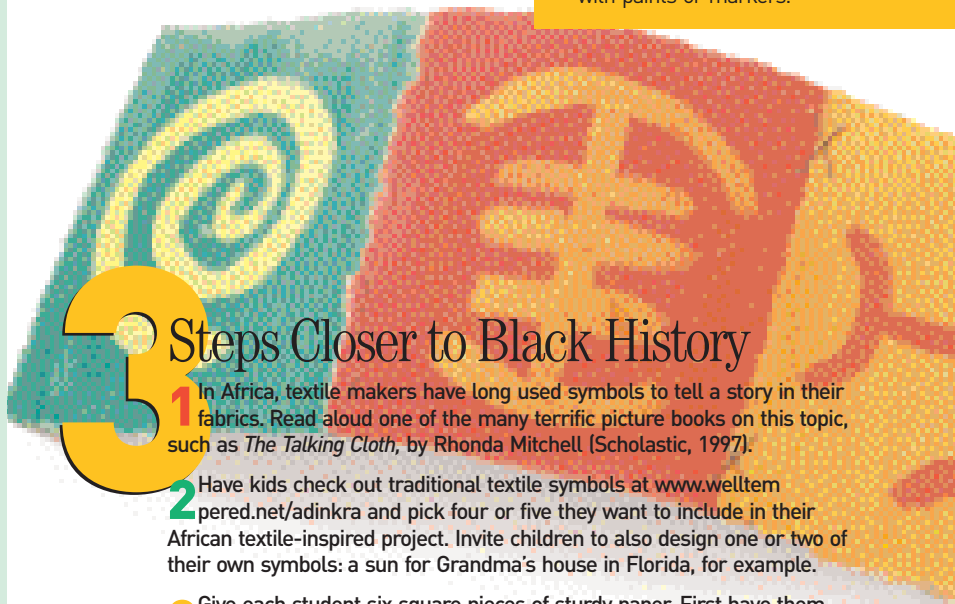
APPLIANCE BOX Cut off the back of a large appliance box (often available free at appliance stores), then cut a hole in the front. Let children decorate with paints or markers.

3 Steps Closer to Black History

1 In Africa, textile makers have long used symbols to tell a story in their fabrics. Read aloud one of the many terrific picture books on this topic, such as *The Talking Cloth*, by Rhonda Mitchell (Scholastic, 1997).

2 Have kids check out traditional textile symbols at www.welltempered.net/adinkra and pick four or five they want to include in their African textile-inspired project. Invite children to also design one or two of their own symbols: a sun for Grandma's house in Florida, for example.

3 Give each student six square pieces of sturdy paper. First have them paint each square with a bright, solid background. Then have children paint one of their symbols on each square in a contrasting color. Finally, glue, tape, or loosely stitch the squares together.





3 teachers' secrets for cleaning up after the fun

DOOR FRAME Hang a simple curtain on a tension rod halfway up your classroom door frame. Performers stand in the hall; the audience sits in your room.

CEREAL BOX Cut the bottom and top off a cereal box. Put any puppet on your hand and stick it up through the box. When children need to quiet down, bring down your hand to hide the puppet in the box as if the puppet is scared by noise. When they are quiet, stick the puppet back up!

—DR. JEAN FELDMAN, FROM *BEST OF DR. JEAN: PUPPETS & STORYTIME* (SCHOLASTIC, 2008)

■ **FOR GRADES K-2:** I have the children form a line and we march around the room to fun music. When I see a piece of trash, the child in front picks it up and goes to the end of the line and the next child has a turn. They love this! —*Charlene Griffith, Bainbridge, NY*

■ **FOR GRADES 3-5:** I wander the room and make a note of three pieces of trash. Next the kids have one minute to clean. I reward the finders of my “secret scraps” with a small something from my treasure box. —*Diane McCoy, Rohnert Park, CA*

■ **FOR GRADES 6-8:** I like to make clean-up as easy as possible, so before we start a messy project, I cover the tables with plastic table cloths or old shower-curtain liners. After everything is put away, the paper can be thrown out or plastic sponged clean. —*Vanessa Rodriguez, New York, NY*

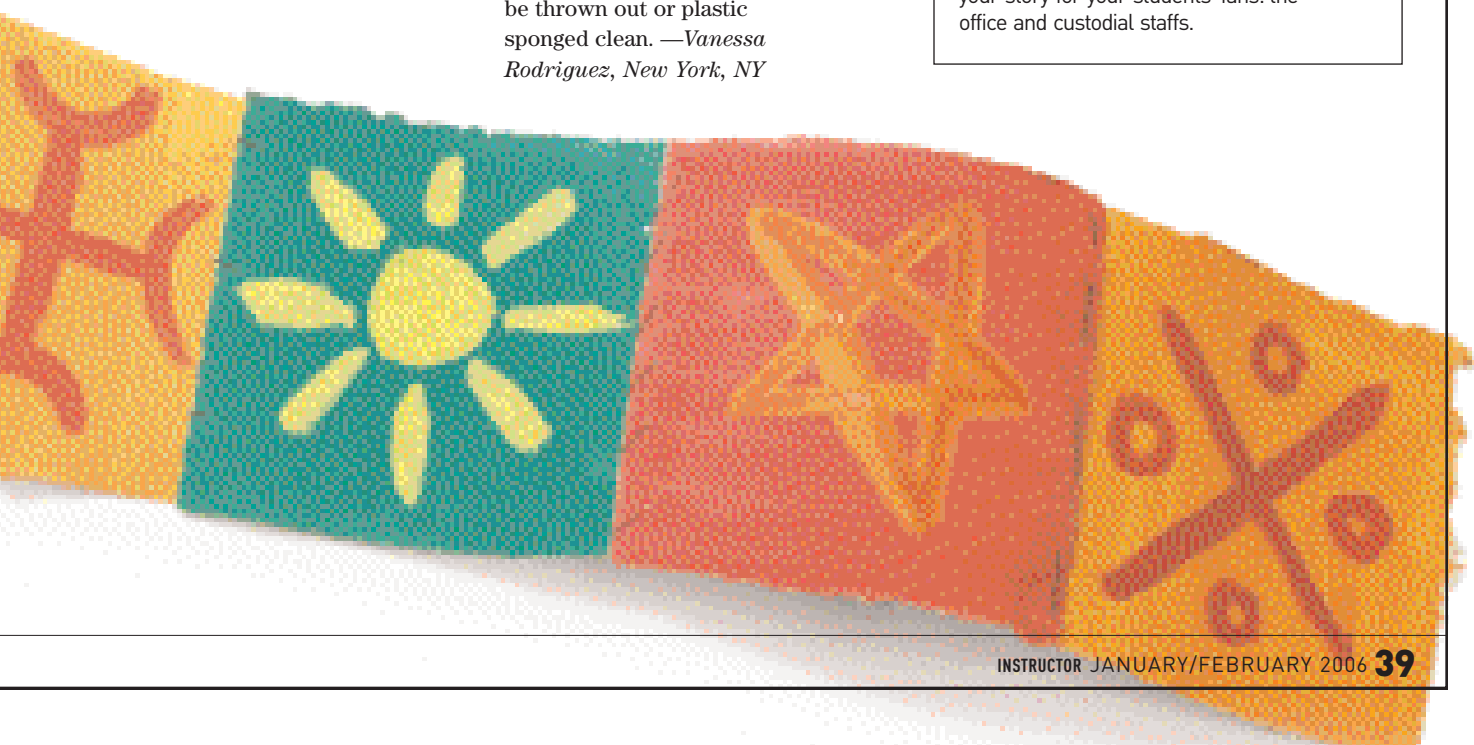
Lessons for Valentine's Day (No Sugar Highs Involved)

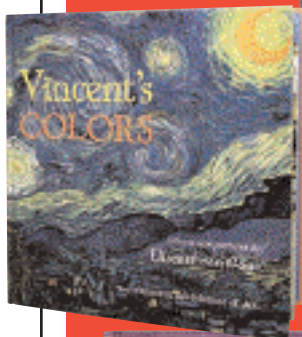
♥ **SING** the catchy “Love Feels” to the tune of “Row Row Row Your Boat,” then do the fun estimation activity in the song. You can find the free lyrics at www.songs4teachers.com.

♥ **CUT** out the heart-y snowflake in the “How To” section of www.allseasons-snowflakes.com and discuss the symmetry in this whimsical decoration.

♥ **COLLAGE** a colorful Valentine using old magazines. Encourage children to stick with colors from one section of the color wheel. Then post them on a bulletin board to create a giant rainbow spectrum.

♥ **WRITE** and illustrate a creative class caper called “The Case of the Missing Valentines.” Stage a dramatic reading of your story for your students’ fans: the office and custodial staffs.





3 Cool Books About Artists

■ **I AM MARC CHAGALL**, by Bimba Landmann (Eerdmans, 2006). Wondering why Chagall painted flying goats and fish? The answer is in this delightfully illustrated biography, which uncovers the artist's fanciful inspiration.

■ **BEETHOVEN'S WIG**, by Richard Perlmutter (Rounder, 2005). Stage a laugh-in: Share these funny new lyrics to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony while you listen to the accompanying CD.

■ **VINCENT'S COLORS**, by Vincent van Gogh (Chronicle, 2005). Wait—van Gogh wrote a book for kids? Actually, the artist didn't anticipate the celeb picture book craze. This book uses excerpts from letters to his brother to tell a sweet, simple story about his work.

Our vote for
the #1 all-time
messiest
art supply:
GLITTER!

Chinese New Year Activities

• **Year of the Dog Calendars** In China, the New Year (this year on January 29) is a time for families to get together. Those who cannot make it to see everyone in person send New Year's cards. A fun twist to this tradition: Invite students to create a "Year of the Dog" calendar to send to friends and family.

• **Good Luck Scrolls** In preparation for Chinese New Year, Chinese people hang scrolls called *chun tian* in their homes. These scrolls contain good wishes for the coming year. To make your own: Have each child think about what they wish for the new year and then write it on a long red piece of paper with a black marker.

• **New Year's Dragons** Create your own Chinese dragon out of papier-mâché and paints. Once it is complete, your class can parade it through the school.

—TARA BARDEEN (FOR MORE IDEAS, VISIT HER WEB SITE AT WWW.RICEPAPERKITE.COM)



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Huge Benefits of Arts Education (Tell Your School Board)

- Captivation
- Pleasure
- Better ability to empathize
- Cognitive growth
- Creation of social bonds
- Expression of meaning
- Improved test scores
- Improved self-efficacy, learning skills, and health
- Development of social capital
- Economic growth

SOURCE: RAND CORPORATION, 2005

3 topics you'll cover by building a pinhole camera

■ **ART HISTORY** Pinhole cameras are similar to the first cameras ever made. You don't even need film—instead the camera projects an image upside down on a screen.

■ **MYSTERIES OF SCIENCE** Pinhole cameras are a hands-on way to teach refraction. Here's how they work: The pinhole acts as a lens. It focuses the light coming through to create the image seen.

■ **INVENTIONS** What else can your kids use to make a camera? Challenge them to make their own using a cereal box, a milk carton, or even a piece of fruit.

For instructions on how to make the version shown, go to www.exploratorium.edu.

(Continued on page 57)

Bring characters to life with 3 drama games

1 town square

Turn your classroom into Hogsmeade! Invite students to imagine they are walking through the "town square" or main meeting place in a book they're reading. Have students stand in the four corners of the room. Direct two at a time to walk to the middle. When they meet, you can give them a scenario from the book or script to act out, or simply allow them to improvise a conversation between two characters.

2 talk show

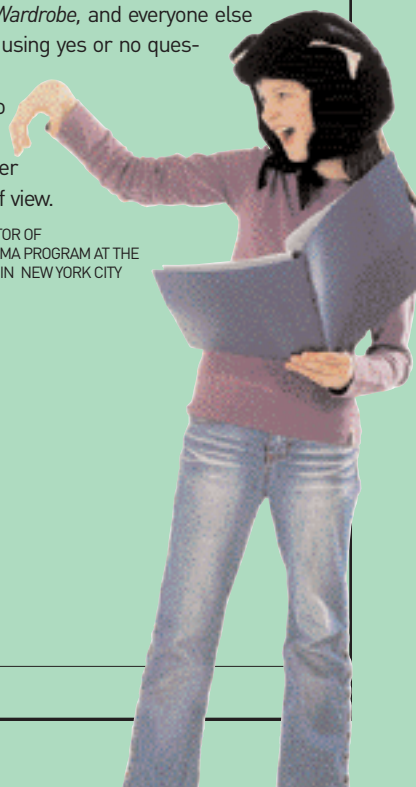
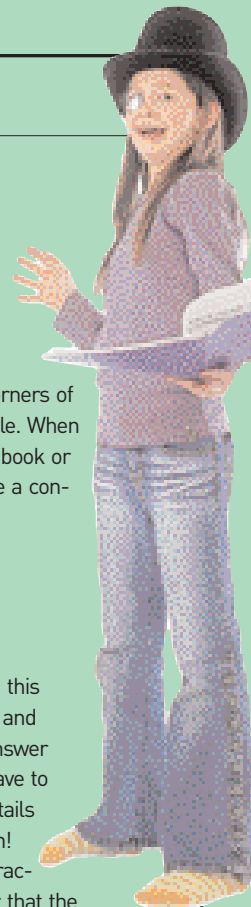
What would Judy Blume's Fudge say to Oprah? In this game, one student acts as the host of a talk show and asks other students questions, which they must answer completely as their characters. This means kids have to know their characters' likes, dislikes, and other details that might come up in the course of a conversation! Pretend that the book has ended and that the characters have gathered to discuss their experiences, or that the action is paused at a crucial moment while you hear from characters about how they feel about the situation and what they are planning to do next.

3 book celebrity

In the simplest version of this game, one student gets up in front of the class to "be" a character, such as the White Witch from *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, and everyone else has to guess who the character is using yes or no ques-

tions. The student giving the responses should do so "as" that character and think about his or her perspective and point of view.

—LISA FISCHLER, DIRECTOR OF
THE ELEMENTARY DRAMA PROGRAM AT THE
CHURCHILL SCHOOL IN NEW YORK CITY



5 Best-Ever Kid CDs

■ WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS

(Shel Silverstein, Sony) Just the best: Silverstein is hilarious!

■ THE BABYSITTERS

(Alan Arkin and Lee Hays) Roots kid's music from the late '50s and early '60s.

■ WHA'D'YA WANNA DO

(Peter Alsup) Peter did kid's music when it wasn't fashionable, and he's never been afraid to be honest.

■ WONDERFULNESS

(Bill Cosby, Warner Bros) Not a "kid's" album per se, but certainly enjoyed by kids—my two boys wet their pants listening to it.

■ AIR GUITAR

(Cathy Fink and Marcy Marxer, High Windy Audio) These two brought kids musicianship to a whole new level.

—BILL HARLEY, CHILDREN'S SINGER AND STORYTELLER, WHOSE LATEST ALBUM IS *ONE MORE TIME* (TRACK STAR MEDIA)

3 Classics to Keep...

- Kid self-portraits
- Perspective drawing
- Dioramas

and 3 to Kiss Goodbye...

- The hand turkey
- God's eyes
- Coloring book pages!

3 Imaginative Teachers You Should Meet

1. KATHLEEN THOMPSON When Kathleen Thompson wanted to combine character education with her art classes, she helped pull in a four-year, \$1.7 million federal grant. The program, Character through the Arts, is in nine pilot schools in Georgia, and funds projects based on three components: building character, working with an artist, and following a certain curricular model. In one of many lessons Thompson developed, she and the school librarian, who's also a story-

teller, will teach children about Indonesian shadow puppets. Students make puppets and write and perform plays that, like traditional Indonesian shadow puppet tales, teach a lesson about good and evil.

2. KATHY DOUGLAS Every time students enter Kathy Douglas's art room at Central Elementary School in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts, they can choose what they'll do that day. Douglas spends five minutes presenting a new medium (like sculpture or painting), and then students head for centers, where they try the new skill they've just seen or work in media presented in previous classes. Choice is the cornerstone of the theory Douglas helped develop, Teaching for Artistic Behavior, which is followed in several dozen classrooms across the country. Children can develop a passion for a particular medium, and try new ones at their own pace.

3. ANNE YOUNG Teacher Anne Young believes art is crucial to understanding stories—especially for struggling readers and writers. That's why she has her students at the Number Six School in Woodmere, New York, learn about and make triptychs (three-paneled paintings that tell a story). Young, who's received a grant for her lessons combining art and literacy, also has her students look at Aboriginal dot paintings and talk about what messages they contain. Young says she sees her program working when students come into class eager to share tales passed down through their own families, generation to generation.

—MADELINE FARBMAN

3 Web Sites That'll Help You Pay for Fingerpaints

■ WWW.NASSA-ARTS.ORG

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies lists a number of great classroom grants. Click on "Arts Over America" to get started.

■ WWW.AEP-ARTS.ORG

Find a grant that's right for you on the Arts Education Partnership's page of more than 100 arts-funding links.

■ WWW.ED.GOV/PROGRAMS/ARTSEDMODEL

The U.S. Department of Education's

arts-integration grant for elementary and middle schools. —JESSICA ROSEVEAR

4 Out-of-the-Box Projects Proven to Draw Kids In

1. CARTOONING Middle schoolers at Prospect Hill Academy in Cambridge, Massachusetts, put together a quarterly cartooning magazine. They work on cartooning every week for two periods, perfecting their skills such as drawing hand poses and more. The school also offers electives on knitting and hip-hop culture. "It's unconventional," says teacher Doug Anderson. "But it's a low-pressure way to build children's confidence."

2. DEGAS DAY Every year, young ballerinas dance around Susan Costello's Winchester, Massachusetts, classroom to the Nutcracker Suite, while other students capture their movements on paper. Costello herself records the dancers, other students, and drawings in a video she calls a "chalkumentary." The Lincoln Elementary School students are fascinated to see themselves at work, as are parents, Costello says. "There's no stadium seating in the art classroom."

3. PUEBLO POTTERY At the rural John Poole Middle School in Poolesville, Maryland, students don't just make pueblo pottery, they build the pit in which the clay is fired. Students study pueblos, then teacher Nori Thorne helps them dig the hole, lining it with bricks and dried manure. Before firing the pots, they perform a traditional ceremony, tossing corn to the four winds.

4. A NIGHT IN JAPAN To culminate her study of Japan, every year Ann Kynion hosts a special evening of Japanese skills and crafts for her students and their families at Willard South Elementary School in Willard, Missouri. The children sing Japanese songs, try calligraphy, stencil *hoppo* coats, and make fish prints with rubber fish. —MADELINE FARBMAN

And finally...

4 awesome arts libraries you can win (See page 59) for your classroom from *Instructor Magazine*. □